

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 8002

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG EG

SUBJECT: QATTARA DEPRESSION PROJECT

REF: CAIRO 7681

1. SINCE SENDING REFTEL, WE HAVE RECEIVED ANOTHER TELEPHONE CALL FROM MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY UNDER SECRETARY MAHER ABAZA ASKING ABOUT THE APPOINTMENT OF AN AMERICAN FOR THE QATTARA PROJECT ADVISORY BAORD. ABAZA INDICATED GOE IS ANXSIOUS TO HAVE A REPLY TO MINELECTRICITY SULTAN'S LETTER OF JUNE 11.

2. COMMENT: IT IS NOW ALMOST TWO MONTHS SINCE SULTAN'S LETTER WAS SENT TO DEPT (CAIRO 6080). I THINK WE LOOK BAD IN NOT RPT NOT AS YET HAVING GIVEN AN ANSWER. I RECOGNIZE THERE ARE LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS EGYPTIAN REQUEST AND THAT DISAGREEMENT EXISTS AMONG INTERESTED USG OFFICES. THIS BUREAUCRATIC INFIGHTING SHOULD BE RESOLVED. I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT DURING MY TALKS IN WASHINGTON WE HAD COME A LONG WAY IN DEVELOPING A REASONABLY RESPONSIVE REPLY. IF THIS IS NOT SO, I AGAIN REQUEST THATINTERESTED USG OFFICES GET TOGETHER WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY TO APPROVE A REPLY. THE EGYPTIANS HAVE MADE WHAT THEY REGARD AS A PROPER REQUEST TO US AND CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO UNDERSTAND OUR DELAY IN ANSWERING.

3. AS I UNDERSTAND IT, AEC OFFICERS WHO TALKED WITH VISITING GERMAN TEAM LAST YEAR ENCOURAGED OR LEAST LEFT OPEN

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POSSIBILITY OF US PARTICIPATION IN NUCLEAR EXCAVATION ACTIVITIES

FOR QATTARA PROJECT. THIS IMPRESSION WAS PASSED ON TO EGYPTIANS. I HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY GATHERED THE PLOWSHARE PROGRAM HAS TAPERED INTO NOTHING AND LEGAL PROBLEMS PERTAINING TO THE LNTB TREATY ARE INVOLVED. IF SO, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY SO INDICATE TO THE EGYPTIANS. THEY, TOO, ARE SIGNATORIES OF THE LNTB TREATY. THEY, TOO, ARE SIGNATORIES OF THE LNTB TREATY. EGYPTIANS WILL BE DISAPPOINTED, BUT I BELIEVE THEY WILL UNDERSTAND REASONS FOR OUR CONCERN. IN ANY CASE, I QUESTION WHETHER USG SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO INTRODUCE PLOWSHARE ACTIVITIES INTO THE MIDDLE EAST. WHATEVER THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS MAY BE, WE WOULD BE INVITING MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I HAVE NO RELUCTANCE TO SO INFORM THE EGYPTIANS, AND CERTAINLY THE MORE POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED AMONG THEM WILL UNDERSTAND.

4. PARA 3 NOTWITHSTANDING, I CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT A TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED AMERICAN SHOULD BE NAMED TO THE QATTARA BOARD. ALTHOUGH SULTAN ASKED FOR A NUCLEAR EXPERT, I SEE NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD NOT OFFER A MORE BROADLY TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED ENGINEER WHO COULD ASSIST IN SOUND PLANNING FOR QATTARA. IF EGYPTIANS DO NOT WANT NOT WISH SUCH A PERSON, THEY ARE FREE TO SO INDICATE. QATTARA IS AN ENORMOUS PROJECT AND MAY NEVER MATERIALIZE, BUT ALTERNATIVE TECHNICAL APPROACHES SHOULD BE EXPLORED. IF PROJECT DOES PROCEED ALONG SOME FEASIBLE LINES, THE PRESENCE OF AN AMERICAN ON THE BOARD WOULD ENABLE US TO LEARN OF PROJECT PLANS AND TO BE ABLE TO PROMOTE AMERICAN COMMERCIAL PARTICIPATION AS APPROPRIATE. FRENCH AND GERMANS ARE PARTICIPATING ON THE BOARDS, LARGELY WE BELIEVE BECAUSE OF POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT IT MAY OFFER.

5. NEXT QATTARA BOARD MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 19. THIS MAY BE A BIT CLOSE, BUT I RECOMMEND WE AT LEAST OFFER A NAME TO THE EGYPTIANS AS AN AMERICAN PARTICIPANT.
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